



Website Review: Archives And History Centennial Celebration - 100 Years Of Public History In North Carolina

Reviewed By: **Greta Reisel Browning**

Abstract

Review of the website: <http://www.ah.dcr.state.nc.us/centennial/default.htm>, by the North Carolina Office of Archives and History.

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Archives and History Centennial Celebration: 100 Years of Public History in North Carolina.

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The Office of Archives and History has preserved North Carolina's cultural resources for the last 100 years and is no doubt looking forward to 100 more. The Tar Heel state boasts the third oldest state archives and history department in the country after Alabama (1901) and Mississippi (1902). Currently, the Department of Cultural Resources' Office of Archives and History encompasses three major sub-departments: State History Museums, State Historic Sites, and Historical Resources. The centennial web site provides an attractive and educational overview of these three sub-departments' 100 years of history and a guide to the commemorative events scheduled in 2003. The site also serves as a preview for the forthcoming book, *History for All the People: 100 Years of Public History in North Carolina* (February 2003), by Ansley Herring Wegner of the Research Branch of the Office of Archives and History. The site consists of eight main sections that are linked from the home page. Dr. Jeffrey J. Crow, Deputy Secretary for the North Carolina Office of Archives and History, introduces the site. He comments that the accomplishments of these 100 years have revealed two major features: that North Carolinians love their history, particularly as this appreciation has translated into funding from the General Assembly, and that the staff of the office has been dedicated to that history through service and professionalism in their fields. In the sidebar of Dr. Crow's introduction (the same buttons are available from many of the site's sections) is an "A&H in a Nutshell" button, which leads the reader to a concise history of the Office of Archives and History, from its beginnings on March 7, 1903, as the government-legislated North Carolina Historical Commission, through the present day.

Coupled nicely with the summary of the Office of Archives and History's development is the more detailed "Timeline" section. This page contains a chronological listing of key years in the office's development, divided by decade. When applicable, hotlinks are provided to referenced organizations and Office of Archives and History websites, such as the Historical Publications and the State Archives sites.

The "Images" and "Features" sections provide the bulk of information about the office's history through visual and narrative presentations, both arranged by decade. The office's esteemed forbearers, such as R.D.W. Connor, the first archivist appointed by the North Carolina Historical Commission (1907) and the first Archivist of the United States (1934), and Christopher Crittenden, who began as the secretary of the North Carolina Historical Commission in 1935 and continued his association with the office for thirty-four years, make their full appearances in these sections along with other notable individuals. Significant topics and events are also documented through images and text. Subjects include: the raising of the Confederate ironclad *Neuse* from the Neuse River in 1961, the *North Carolina v. B. C. West Jr.* replevin case in 1977, the Museum of History's "The Black Presence in North Carolina" exhibit in 1978, and images of historic sites in eastern North Carolina that were damaged by Hurricane Floyd in 1999. Although notables and notable topics in the office's past are described here, interwoven and recognized as well are many of the less high-profile employees of the office who have served to preserve North Carolina's past for her people. Whether caught on film or documented through their daily work of providing preservation and access to the elements of the North Carolina's past, these sections salute both noted and lesser-known public historians in the Office of Archives and History through the years.

The "Exhibits" section features information about a traveling exhibit created for the centennial. The exhibit, "History for All the People: The North Carolina Historical Commission: One Hundred Years of Public History" was written by Charlotte Brow and Patricia Samford and will be on display at the State

Capitol and the Museum of History during the Centennial Celebration, March 7-8, 2003. For those who are interested in the exhibit in advance, the exhibit text is provided in this section. The "Events" section describes plans for the Centennial Celebration to be held in downtown Raleigh in March and upcoming events around the state.

The "Map" link refers the viewer to an interactive map denoting major historic sites and museums across the state. Viewers can click on specific names to read more about the work of the Office of Archives and History in those counties. One can also explore the state's cultural resources by region. The final link from the home page, "Buy the Book," takes the reader to information about Ansley Herring Wegner's forthcoming book, *History for All the People*, due out in February 2003.

The strength of this web site lies in its appeal to many levels of interest and learning styles. The web surfer can view images, read narrative text, view a timeline, or read exhibit text to learn about the office's history. Individuals who have worked in the Office of Archives and History, those who have used or visited the office's resources, and others who would like to learn more will all be interested in this centennial site. The site design, layout, and quality of research and writing are additional strengths. For example, Mark Anderson Moore's design lends itself to easy navigation, and the Research Branch's superior research and presentation create a pleasant and educational web experience. Perhaps links to the site's main sections on each page would better serve the ultimate web surfer who wanted to flip back and forth between sections. Currently, the viewer must return to the home page to link to other sections.

In Dr. Crow's introduction, he states that the staff's dedication to the public service aspect of public history and the commitment that North Carolinians have shown to their past have been outstanding features of the office's 100 years of operation. This centennial web site clearly documents these aspects and is further evidence that the office intends to continue to reach out to North Carolinians for many more years to come.

Greta Reisel Browning

The University of Georgia at Athens